

# Climate-Watch, April 1999

*National Climatic Data Center - April 23, 1999*



**Super Outbreak of Tornadoes  
of April 3-4, 1974**  
**148 Twisters in 24 hours.**

---

## Introduction

This month is the 25th anniversary of the famous "Xenia Tornado Outbreak" which occurred on April 3-4, 1974. This super outbreak spawned a total of 148 tornadoes which occurred in the 24-hour period from noon CST April 3rd to noon CST April 4th. Thirty of these tornadoes were classified as F4 or F5 on the [Fujita-Pearson Tornado Scale](#). The combined path length of all tornadoes was 2598 miles. Additional tornadoes occurred during the night of April 2nd and during the afternoon of April 4th. Numerous hailstorms and damaging winds were also reported with this system. NOAA's Natural Disaster Survey statistics showed that there were 315 storm related fatalities, with 6142 storm related injuries; 27,590 families suffered losses, and damages were over 600 million dollars (1974 dollars). A special NOAA Technical Report, complete with satellite photo's and detailed meteorological analysis, is available below.

Across the U.S. early in April 1999, seven illegal immigrants from Mexico perished in mountains around San Diego County, California as a result of snowstorms, and 130 more were rescued. The snowstorm also caused a single engine plane to crash in which four persons were killed. Tornadoes in northwestern Louisiana on April 3-4th caused 6 fatalities in Benton, with 100 people injured and 500 made homeless. From April 1-15, 1999 there were 17 deaths due to tornadoes: 6 in Louisiana, 2 in Illinois, 7 in Ohio, 1 in Mississippi, and 1 in North Carolina.

The lack of precipitation across portions of the southeast this spring is starting to cause some concerns - in terms of drought. Florida is one of the drier areas of the country, as wildfires again this spring have burned thousands of acres already this month. These archived satellite images show heat signatures (red spots) from areas of fire burning in the southeastern United States-- [NOAA OSEI Satellite Imagery of fire-related phenomena](#) (smoke, hot spots, burn scars). Florida

is no stranger to wild fire problems--NCDC also produced a WWW report highlighting last year's (1998) fires in Florida-- [Florida Wild Fires and Climate Extremes](#).

Elsewhere around the globe, in Africa, flooding hit portions of northern Malawi with about 2000 individuals in twenty villages affected. Drought is causing problems across portions of Somalia. In western Colombia, weeks of torrential rains caused two mudslides that killed at least five people and trapped (possibly killed) another 25. In northwest China's Qinghai province, more than 1000 lakes (which are the source of the Yellow river) have dried up because of deteriorating environmental factors and the lack of rain. Farmers in China's Shaanxi province say that the green wheat sprouts in their fields are a miracle at a time when people are worrying about withered crops during the long period of drought. Shaanxi had suffered from drought since October 1998. Farmers have used plastic sheeting to keep their seedlings from withering due to the lack of moisture. A good harvest is expected this year due to the application of the new technology. Details of this and other global extremes can be found at the following [NOAA Special Global Summary for April 1999](#).

---

## **Tornado Outbreak of April 3-4, 1974**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issued a complete Technical Report on this tornado outbreak back in October 1975. The satellite images in the on-line PDF version are of poor quality and have been reprocessed. The images are available below. A PDF version of the report is available:

**Warning:** The following file is **VERY Large (7.6Mb)**. You may want to download it (use right mouse button) and view it from your hard drive rather than try to click on the following link. [NOAA Technical Report, "Tornado Outbreak of April 3-4, 1974: Synoptic Analysis"](#)

## **Satellite Images from the Report:**

[NOAA ATS-III Photo, 1511 GMT, April 3, 1974](#)

[NOAA ATS-III Photo, 1754 GMT, April 3, 1974](#)

[NOAA ATS-III Photo, 2100 GMT, April 3, 1974](#)

---

## **Selected U.S. City and State Extremes**

The [Selected U.S. City and State Extremes](#) gives a listing of new records that were set across the U.S. during April 1999.

---

## **Additional Resources**

[NCDC Climatic Extremes and Weather Events](#)

[NCDC NEXRAD National Mosaic Reflectivity Images \(national radar composites\)](#)

[Yesterday's Severe Weather Reports \(list\)](#)

[Yesterday's Severe Weather Reports \(map\)](#)

[NOAA NWS Office of Meteorology Monthly U.S. Disaster Map](#)

[1999 Killer Tornadoes](#)

[Monthly Tornado Statistics](#)

---

## **Citing the Article**

Ross, Tom; Lott, Neal; "Climate-Watch April 1999"; May 1999; NOAA's National Climatic Data Center, Asheville, NC